



JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD IN PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON MONDAY 15TH JANUARY 2024 AT 5.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor A. Whitcombe – Chair

Councillors:

M. Adams, E.M. Aldworth, A. Angel, C. Bishop, A. Broughton-Pettit, M. Chacon-Dawson, P. Cook, C.J. Cuss, N. Dix, G. Ead, C. Elsbury, G. Enright, K. Etheridge, M. Evans, A. Farina-Childs, C. Forehead, A. Gair, C. Gordon, D. Harse, T. Heron, A. Hussey, D. Ingram-Jones, L. Jeremiah, G. Johnston, S. Kent, A. Leonard, C. Mann, A. McConnell, B. Miles, B. Owen, T. Parry, L. Phipps, M. Powell, D. Preece, H. Pritchard, J.A. Pritchard, J. Roberts, R. Saralis, J. Simmonds, C. Thomas, L.G. Whittle, S. Williams, W. Williams, and C. Wright.

Cabinet Members:

Councillors S. Morgan (Leader of Council), C. Andrews (Education and Communities), E. Forehead (Social Care), N. George (Corporate Services, Property and Highways), P. Leonard (Planning and Public Protection), C. Morgan (Waste, Leisure and Green Spaces), J. Pritchard (Prosperity, Regeneration and Climate Change), and Mrs E. Stenner (Finance and Performance).

Together with:

Officers: D. Street (Deputy Chief Executive), M. S. Williams (Corporate Director Economy and Environment), L. Sykes (Deputy Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer), H. Lancaster (Transformation Manager – Engagement), M. Lloyd (Head of Infrastructure), H. Jones (Waste Strategy and Operations Manager), C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Manager), A. Jones (Committee Services Officer) and J. Lloyd (Committee Services Officer).

Also in attendance: E. Hallett (WRAP Cymru).

RECORDING, FILMING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chair reminded those present that the meeting was being live-streamed and recorded and would be made available following the meeting via the Council's website – [Click Here to View](#). Members were advised that voting on decisions would be taken via Microsoft Forms.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R. Chapman, S. Cook, D. Cushing, E. Davies, D.T Davies, J. E. Fussell, M. James, J. Jones, D. Price, J. Reed, J. Roberts, J. Scriven, J. Taylor, J. Winslade, and K. Woodland.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at the commencement or during the course of the meeting.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following report.

3. JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 26TH OCTOBER 2023.

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the meeting held on 26th October 2023 be approved as a correct record, subject to an amendment requested by Councillor B. Owen in relation to paragraph 5, page 5, of the minutes of 26th October 2023. To clarify that his comments related to the Well-Being Objectives as a whole, rather than just WBO5 specifically, as he felt had been indicated in the minutes. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation (and in noting there were 32 for, 0 against, and 6 abstentions), this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Joint Scrutiny Committee held on 26th October 2023 (minute nos. 1 – 3) be approved as a correct record, subject to an amendment requested by Councillor B. Owen in relation to paragraph 5, page 5, of the minutes of 26th October 2023. To clarify that his comments related to the Well-Being Objectives as a whole, rather than just WBO5 specifically, as he felt had been indicated in the minutes.

4. DRAFT WASTE STRATEGY.

Councillor C. Morgan (Cabinet Member for Waste, Leisure and Green Spaces) introduced the report which sought the views of the Joint Scrutiny on the Councils' Draft Waste Strategy prior to consideration by Cabinet followed by public consultation, and to set out the draft engagement strategy and draft consultation questionnaire along with proposed timescales.

The report also outlined the financial implications associated with the delivery of the strategy and provided an update on discussions with Welsh Government regarding capital support in order to gain a steer on the Councils' suggested contribution. Members were advised that the Draft Waste Strategy builds upon the previously approved Routemap and sets out the strategic direction to reduce waste and exceed Welsh Government statutory recycling targets.

A Member thanked Officers for their commitment in producing the strategy and sought clarification on the inclusion of the trial booking system in the draft proposals, which had already been rejected by Cabinet. The Member proposed the removal of the trial booking system from the proposals included in the report.

Prior to voting on the Members' motion, Members were provided with details of the cross-party working group meetings, where the booking system had been considered and agreed.

The representative from Waste Resources Action Programme (WRAP) Cymru, advised Members that they assist Local Authorities with their Waste Strategies. Members were given information on booking systems currently running in other Local Authorities, and the advantages of these.

A Member queried whether larger families would be allowed additional or larger bins when collections are moved to 3 weekly and noted concerns that this change to 3 weekly would result in additional bags placed to the side of the bin that may not be collected. The Member also queried whether a 'sort and sell' shop could be made available at the recycling centres, where usable items could be sold at a low price and avoid going into landfill.

Members were advised that larger bins would be made available for families, where need was assessed as valid, and that a similar 'sort and sell' shop was already running at the Penallta site and the council may look at introducing additional facilities like this elsewhere going forward.

A Member who participated in the working party, thanked Officers for the information provided and the visits undertaken by Officers in the working group. It was noted that the booking system was not unanimously voted for by the working group, and that the site visit to a HWRC at Blaenau Gwent revealed that access to their booking system was available on weekdays and weekends at Blaenau Gwent, and that the operatives on site saw it as really helpful.

Members were reminded that the proposed booking system was only a trial and that bookings would be available on the same day as required.

A Member suggested that an increase in fly tipping may occur where residents were not able to book when required and had already 'filled up' their vehicles with items for the recycling centre, and queried whether there was any evidence of this from other Local Authorities who had already introduced a booking system. Members were advised by the representative from WRAP Cymru that this information was not currently available but that the relevant data could be requested for Members from other Councils.

A Member referred to a previous scrutiny committee meeting where the booking system was proposed, and Members were against it, yet it was still proposed to be introduced. The Member noted that residents should be encouraged to recycle, and that the introduction of a booking system would make it a more complicated process to access these sites.

Members were advised that the proposed booking system was to try and increase recycling and alleviate the risk of receiving a £2m fine from Welsh Government. Most residents would abide by the rules and use the booking system as opposed to fly tipping, and those residents that do would be dealt with.

A Member sought clarification on the funding for kerbside containers for residents. Members were advised that some funding would come from Welsh Government, but exact figures are not yet known.

A Member congratulated Officers on the Waste Strategy and referred to appendix 2 of the report, the Engagement Strategy. The Member queried whether this only applied to the Waste Strategy or all Council Strategies / service changes. Members were advised that the Engagement Strategy was written for the Draft Waste Strategy but the principles of engaging with residents would continue to be the same for other proposed strategies or service changes.

A Member commented on the 10-page consultation questionnaire and suggested it was too long for completion by residents.

A Member sought clarification on the £115,000 cost for a 'trial' booking system. Reference was also made to the Blaenau Gwent system whereby it was run on a part booked/part non booked basis to encourage residents to attend the site. The Member also suggested that the strategy was missing key elements in relation to fly tipping, and that a fly tipping policy may be required.

A Member queried whether a trial booking system could be held on just one of the HWRC sites. Members were advised that this would not significantly reduce the software costs involved, and that if the trial were held over six sites, more data would be obtained than if it were just run at one site.

Further discussion followed regarding the booking system, and reference was made to the working group site visits which were positive. Sites could plan appropriate staff cover on the basis of bookings made, busier days/times and a booking system would improve Health & Safety for staff on site by offering them a greater degree of protection when presented with confrontation by service users. A Member noted that all attempts should be made to use a booking system for residents, in order to avoid unnecessary fines.

A Member sought clarification on how residents would be supported in sheltered accommodation, where shared bins are misused. Some residents have additional needs, and the Member suggested these residents would need support to understand the different bins. There was also concern over the issue of section 46 notices to these residents. Members were advised that a warden was present at the particular premises referred to, and contact would be made with them to provide advice and guidance to the residents.

A Member noted that the vehicles visiting Aberbargoed recycling site recently were seen queueing out onto the main road, and this would potentially become worse when the mixed bags of recycling are no longer allowed and require sorting on site. The Member supported the trial booking system being brought in as this would reduce waiting times and long queues causing obstruction on the highway

A Member clarified that the questions in the 10-page consultation questionnaire did not all have to be answered to complete the survey. Members were advised that residents were invited to complete the survey and were only required to answer those questions that were relevant to them.

A Member raised the issue of the food caddies and noted that the money spent on providing free bags to residents could have been saved over the next 2 years, also noting that the bags were allegedly not the right size for the food caddy bins. Members were advised that the bin liners provided for indoor caddies were purchased following a number of trials. The Member noted that he would use the new bags when he received them.

A Member noted that if the recycling facilities were to be reduced, this would not help to increase recycling. Clarification was also sought on whether a move to 3 weekly refuse collections would cause issues where bins had been 'stacked' and where extra bags were left by the side of the bins. Members were advised that if residents were all recycling to the maximum capacity, the 3 weekly refuse bin collections would be sufficient. Members were also advised that where some residents meet certain criteria, they will receive support with refuse collections, provided they are recycling properly.

Following these discussions, Members returned to the motion to remove the trial booking system from the proposals included in the report.

It was moved and seconded that this motion be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation (and in noting there were 26 for, 17 against, and 1 abstention), this was agreed by the majority present.

The Joint Scrutiny Committee considered the draft waste strategy, the draft engagement strategy, and accompanying draft consultation questionnaire, and it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the Officers report be approved, subject to the amendment to remove the trial booking system. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation (and in noting there were 35 for, 1 against, and 6 abstentions), this was agreed by the majority present.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet:

The Draft Waste Strategy be considered, with the removal of the trial booking system.

The meeting closed at 6.28 p.m.

Approved as a correct record, subject to any amendments agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on the 26th of February 2024.

CHAIR